



**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES May 19, 2020**

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	May 19, 2020
<b>Location:</b>	Webex
<b>Attendees:</b>	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Vice Chairperson Sarah Wolf Ken Warnock Caroline Weld Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Lukas Shan, Student Representative
<b>Absent:</b>	
<b>Guests:</b>	
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Gail Hunter

**AGENDA**

- A. Call to Order** – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.
- B. Business Meeting Open Session**
  - 1) **Public Comment** – There was no public comment prior to the meeting.
  - 2) **Chairperson’s Report** – Included in meeting and budget discussions.
  - 3) **Student Report** –

Lukas shared with the Committee information about a Rubric grading system which give students a rating of 0 to 4 on their work. Teachers in two of his classes are uses the rubric. Ms. Erdmann asked how Lukas was feeling about the rubric, Lukas stated he thought it was pretty fair. Ms. Erdmann also asked how Lukas was feeling with the weather improving he stated he is feeling better and continues to connect with his friends online. Ms. Erdmann stated Lukas' Hospital effort was a great success. Lukas stated it was a fun and satisfying project.

Ms. Weld asked Lukas if the rubric was standard. Superintendent Beaudoin stated use of the rubric is up to the teacher's discretion. Ms. Erdmann stated the rubric is a gage to see who is engaged and who is not. Superintendent stated classes create their own contract there is not one standardized rubric. Principal Puglisi will address the rubric during the next Committee meeting.

Ms. Erdmann thanked Lukas wished him continued success and added she hopes he can see his friends soon.

#### **4) Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants –
- Minutes – 5.5.2020

*Ms. Cameron moved to accept the Consent Agenda, Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **5) Sub-Committee Reports**

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron) – Report

Ms. Cameron reported the School Building Committee had met last week and the project is progressing well. W T Rich is developing a recovery plan and delivery of the building is scheduled for August 2020. The Building Committee received a change order related to Covid-19 expenses. Dorn & Wittier requested additional time to review and provide feedback. Ms. Cameron concluded the project is in good shape and within budget. Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas agreed with Ms. Cameron summary.

- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Erdmann indicated there was a lot to report following the most recent Collaboration Group meetings. Moving forward there are many unknowns related to the District and Town budgets. Given that the primary focus for the District is delivering program. The District is working with the Towns weekly to evaluate the best way to navigate through the unknowns keeping in mind District programs and the needs of the Towns.

That said following discussions with both Town Administrators and representatives of the Towns it was decided to put the Eagle's Nest Playground on hold for 6 to 9 months. Data points to budget shortfalls for both Towns is unknown and the situation is anticipated to be onerous. The District's focus needs to be on developing a budget that serves students.

Mr. Urbas stated there would be additional information available in the summer with regard to State support. The District is committed to Eagle's Nest, however the priority focus is education for students. Ms. Erdmann stated the Committee would take public comment at the end of the meeting. She thanked the Playground Committee for the amazing design and their hard work and commitment to the effort. The Covid-19 pandemic was an unforeseen event in all our lives.

Mr. Warnock asked for clarification regarding the motion to approve a purchase order in the amount of \$300K and did the Committee need to move to postpone. Mr. Urbas stated the Committee had approved two motions regarding Eagle's Nest. One to fund the playground for \$300K not to exceed \$350K and a second to approve the purchase order for equipment in the amount of \$300K. Ms. Erdmann stated the playground is on hold and no additional votes are required at this time.

Ms. Cameron stated she had been strongly opposed during the last meeting not moving forward with the playground. However, after hours of discussion and understanding the difficult decisions the Towns were making she agrees the Committee's focus needs to be on delivering education. She fully expects the Committee will be discussing the District budget through summer and it is wise to put off the Eagle's Nest decision until fall.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Rachel Fitzgibbon) – No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

#### **6) Superintendent's Report –**

- School Closure: School Operations & Online Learning Update
  - End of year celebration planning is underway and under the direction of the Principals.
  - Memorial School Project – Packing and moving is underway Superintendent Beaudoin thanked all teachers who came in and packed years of material. The packing was achieved with the help of the custodial staff and Superintendent Beaudoin expressed special thanks to the custodial staff.
  - Pick-Up of student personal items – Items are being bagged and labeled for students to come in and pick-up. Principals will contact School Communities when pick-ups are scheduled.
  - Phase III is going well. The State will be providing guidance in mid to late June. Final Determination on structure of school could be mid to late summer. The District is planning for multiple scenarios. Superintendent Beaudoin understands families want to know what fall will look like she stated it could be remote learning continues, or traditional learning returns or a new schedule of long periods of rolling outages will occur similar to what colleges are planning for starting the semester on campus and going to remote classes after Thanksgiving.

Ms. Cameron asked if the school schedule would be a local decision. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the State anticipates dictating 85% of the guidance with Districts making 15% of the decisions.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated remote learning is not ideal for some families and some learners. There is a push to open schools to allow for some return to normal for work, families and children

## 7) Continued Business

- FY21 Budget Workshop

### Budget Recap

- FY21 Level Services Budget approved in February in collaboration with both Essex and Manchester
- Increases: 3.82% spending = \$996K > level funding and 3.18% assessments (2.94% MBTS/3.61% Essex)
- Key drivers – Health Care and Out of District Costs
- Utilized \$250K of reserves to balance the budget and prevent reduction of services
- Identified capital investment projects for coming year – EES Playground Replacement and Hyland Field Replacement

### Options for Resolving Budget

- Reduce FY21 Budget to Meet Town Request (\$235K)
- Reduce FY21 Budget to Meet Town Request and projected reduction to State Aid
- Reduce FY21 Budget Only to address projected reduction to State Aid
- Make no changes at this time – Consider use of additional reserve funds to address shortfalls.

### FY21 Potential Areas for Reduction

- Revise Budgeted Health Care (\$120K)
- Defer small capital facility investments or utilize reserves to fund (\$60K)
- Staff Reduction through attrition – Hiring Freeze – Replace no positions/all employment groups – Internal shifts/reassignment to support current program
- Examine Program reduction
- Further reductions to supplies, material, etc.
  - Implication of State Budget Process  
1/12<sup>th</sup> Budget Presentation

### Covid-19 Impact

- State revenue shortfalls will likely impact traditional state funding for schools (Chapter 70, Transportation, Circuit Breaker), with unknown impact for Federal Grants (Title I, II, IV, IDEA and Early Childhood) and potentially delay implementation of increased funding through Student Opportunity Act
- Reduction predictions range as high as 10% to 16%

- CFO DESE “10% is not an unreasonable number to use for planning purposes
- Predicted loss of revenues state and town require reexamination of local budgets
- Request by Manchester to reduce school budget by %150K results in a \$235K reduction when factoring through the assessment
- State Budget will likely not be ready until late summer
- Essex/Manchester Town Meetings moved out to end of June
- Potential for a 1/12<sup>th</sup> Budget (\$1million at risk) to begin FY21
- Potential for Federal Stimulus – CARES Act – Assume 80% of Title I allocation to be used through September 2022
- Likely Operational Savings from FY20 Budget – Savings = non-recurring reserve funding, setting up FY22 deficit

### **What is the problem we are trying to solve?**

- Revision the FY21 Budget to meet local economic shortfalls without full understanding of the economic impact to state funding of schools.
- Preparation for potential level funding scenario in which Town ATM’s do not occur prior to 6/30/20.

- Revenue Assumptions

- 10% potential State Aid reduction = \$360K

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$273.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. Additional reserves of \$85K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 1 TA

- 10% including Federal = \$420K

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$333.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K, Fund Annual Facility Small Cap via Stabilization \$60K, and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. Additional reserves of \$85K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 1 TA.

- Reduction = \$655K

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$333.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K, Fund Annual Facility Small Cap via Stabilization \$60K, and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. **Including Program Reductions of \$179.5K and Staffing Reductions of \$65K.** Additional reserves of \$85K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 3.5 FTE/1 TA.

- Reduction = \$1M (1/12<sup>th</sup> Budget)

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$358.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K, Fund Annual Facility Small Cap via Stabilization \$60K, and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. **Including Program Reductions of \$179.5K and Staffing Reductions of \$330.5K and suspend mentor program \$25K.** Additional reserves of \$132K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 5.5 FTE/3 TA and 2.5 Admin/Support.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated in order to prepare for the “New FY21” the District will need to develop 2 additional models depending on the structure of the school year. The proposed reductions assume a normal schedule. However, there could be a blended option which is the costliest option with increase costs related to remote and inside learning.

Increased cost will be around transportation with only 15 students on a bus the District will need to double its current capacity and there will need to be monitors on the buses to assure social distancing. Custodial and maintenance costs will increase, plexiglass cubicles for students may also be required and the District may need to test students for temperatures and symptoms as they come into the building. There will also be additional protection costs for masks, gloves and sanitation not typically incurred The blended option presents significant escalating cost.

### School Committee Discussion

Ms. Cameron asked if there was a possible challenge to the District for prepaying private schools who may no longer be providing services. Mr. Urbas answered that state law required tracking schools regarding their delivery of services, rates are set by the state and he does not anticipate risk for prepaying.

Ms. Erdmann stated it is key during these uncertain times to maintain flexibility as information comes in mid to late summer. Ms. Cameron asked if the CARES dollars were only available for FY20. Superintendent Beaudoin stated historically significant stimulus dollars have been made available but fears in the current political environment that will not be a reality.

Ms. Cameron asked at what level in the reduction proposal the Towns realized a savings in their assessments. Mr. Urbas indicated the Towns would realize a savings at the \$655K and \$1M level. Ms. Erdmann indicated it was better to have a budget supported by the Towns rather than go to 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget.

Ms. Weld asked if the Committee was aware of Essex position with regard to the budget. Essex BOS Chairperson stated the Town planned to stay the course with the proposed District budget. Mr. Fitzgibbon a member of the Essex Finance Committee indicated the District was 51% of the Towns budget and the District can assume there will be cuts in line with declining revenues experienced by the Town.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked Superintendent Beaudoin to speak to the Mentor Program. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Mentor Program was for new teachers to the District. New teachers were assigned to an experienced teacher. The program includes a series of classes and the mentor or coach assists the new teacher in assimilating to the culture and community. The FY21 budget

assumes the District will not be adding new people and funding for the Mentor Program could be reallocated.

Mr. Warnock appreciated the thought that went into creating the four scenarios and the focus on educating students. He also thanked Mr. Urbas and Superintendent Beaudoin for their optimism and indicated it was important to communicate how the District and the School Committee are providing for students and focusing on program.

Ms. Cameron asked about possible personnel reductions and did the District plan to make those reductions prior to the end of June. Ms. Cameron understands reductions cannot be made after June. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated when the \$1M plan was laid out employees would be notified by June 15, 2020. There will likely be reorganization and financial savings through attrition. The District will work with the Association around continued remote operations and adjustments to schedules.

Ms. Wolf stated working families with children need the best possible school the communities can provide.

The Committee reviewed the options presented. Ms. Cameron asked what Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas were recommending. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that was up to the School Committee. Ms. Cameron stated she thought the Committee might consider the second option Ms. Fitzgibbon agreed.

Ms. Erdmann indicated the deeper into cuts the Committee agrees to the fewer options remain as the economic needs of the Towns unfolds.

*Ms. Cameron moved to accept Option One (column one), Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the FY20 Budget was covered in the context of operations saving and revenue assumptions.

- Planning Scenarios & Timeline

- 2021 School Year Calendar – Key Dates
- 1<sup>st</sup> Day for Students: September 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Holiday Break: December 23<sup>rd</sup> to January 4<sup>th</sup>
- Winter Break February 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>
- Spring Recess April 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Graduation: June 4, 2021
- School Committee Meetings are scheduled for June 2, 2020, June 16, 2020 and as needed through the summer. Superintendent Beaudoin will sketch out a calendar for the summer and present at the next meeting.

- School Choice

Superintendent Beaudoin recommended delaying the School Choice discussion until August. At that time, the Committee will discuss bringing in siblings on the list with a close review of opportunities at the Elementary level. Superintendent Beaudoin projected a possible increase in enrollment due to the economy and the impact on private school enrollment. Ms. Erdmann stated she believes August will give siblings enough time to prepare and additional students may not materialize. Ms. Cameron stated she believes it is important to review the revenue piece of School Choice when the discussion takes place.

Ms. Erdmann opened the meeting for Public Comment.

August an EES student spoke to his feelings about the postponement of the new playground. He said he was disappointed and had been looking forward to the new slide and climbing structure. Ms. Erdmann thanked August and let him know the School Committee was disappointed too.

Mr. Foster the Co-Chair of the new EES Playground Committee read a letter expressing his disappointment and understanding. He stated that during School Committee comments about the budget there was no discussion about Capital Projects, no mention of the Memorial School and no consideration of cuts to Memorial School project. The decision to delay was confusing and he would like the School Committee to keep the option for a new playground for EES open.

Additionally, Mr. Foster stated in planning for fall please consider what parents are forced to deal with around no testing and no vaccine.

Kate an Essex resident stated one issue the Committee did not address this evening is the equity issue for Essex. In cutting the project the EES students will not be able to play or exercise while the students at the Memorial School will have a playground. She is concerned the Committee is not prioritizing the mental health of Essex students and it is sending the wrong message to the kids.

Christine Rice Holder, Manchester – stated her children are doing fine with and she is wary about them returning to school in the fall. She feels her children are doing well with remote learning. She would like to know if she could make remote learning an ongoing part of her children's education. Ms. Erdmann indicated the District program is dictated by the State.

Ms. Cameron stated she has heard some criticism from parents about teachers and she is surprised that what she heard is the school day is different and students are not fully engaged. Ms. Cameron is concerned that parents do not understand what remote learning looks like for teachers and how much one-on-one work teachers are engaged in. She believes there are many positives and significant engagement of teachers with students and would like to communicate that to parents.

Ms. Erdmann agrees and would like the Committee to hear more about teacher engagement during these unprecedented times.

## **8) School Committee Comment –**

Ms. Wolf expressed her thanks to the Playground Committee. She stated she is uncomfortable spending money, but students need a playground it is part of the curriculum and she understands it is a hard decision.

**9) Adjourn –**

*Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*